

*February 9, 2011*

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) today met one-on-one with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. Congressman McNerney is a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and serves as the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs. Improving care and benefits for veterans is a top priority for Congressman McNerney.

During the meeting today, Congressman McNerney discussed several issues of importance to veterans with the secretary, including the future of the Livermore Veterans Administration (VA) facility, the status of a new San Joaquin veterans' medical facility, the VA's backlog of benefits claims waiting to be processed, and the need to improve care for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injuries.

"I'm glad to meet with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs about important veterans' issues," said Rep. McNerney. "As a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the ranking member for the Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs, I'm committed to improving care for the men and women who have served our country. This meeting was a good opportunity to discuss with the secretary important issues like our local VA facilities, the VA's backlog in benefit claims, and improving care for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries."

At the Congressman's request, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs visited the Livermore VA last year, toured the facility, and met with a group of local veterans. During today's meeting, Congressman McNerney again urged the secretary to revisit decisions made by past Secretaries of Veterans Affairs to close the Livermore VA and to instead develop a plan that would allow the facility to stay in veterans' hands.

"Today, I again urged the secretary to consider options that would allow the Livermore VA to stay in veterans' hands," said Rep. McNerney. "The Livermore VA is a uniquely situated facility that is an important resource for the thousands of veterans who live in the area. Given its tranquil setting, I've long advocated for the facility to remain in veterans' hands and be used to provide treatment for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. With an increasing number of veterans suffering from PTSD, this type of care is more important than ever."

During today's meeting, the congressman also discussed with the secretary the new veterans' medical facility that is planned for San Joaquin County. Congressman McNerney again expressed to the secretary the importance of completing this facility that will serve thousands of veterans and create approximately 900 jobs.

"Just the other week, local veterans attended my most recent Congress at Your Corner event in Stockton to ask for an update on the VA's decision on where to locate the new medical facility in

San Joaquin County,” said Rep. McNerney. “At today’s meeting with the secretary I expressed again the importance of reaching a decision. This facility will create about 900 jobs and serve thousands of veterans in the area and it’s very important to our community that a final location is selected without delay.”

Congressman McNerney also discussed the need to address the VA’s backlog of benefit claims waiting to be processed. According to the VA, about 400,000 claims are waiting to be processed, but veteran advocacy groups such as the American Legion believe this number to be closer to 1 million. As the Ranking Member for the Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs, Congressman McNerney is the highest ranking Democrat on the subcommittee charged with overseeing how the VA processes many types of benefits for veterans.

Finally, Congressman McNerney and Secretary Shinseki spoke about the need to improve care for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injuries. Congressman McNerney has long advocated for the Livermore VA to remain in veterans’ hands as a facility that provides care for veterans with PTSD and he is also the author of a bill that was signed into law last year that will improve care for veterans with traumatic brain injuries.